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# Research Bulletin

Route to:

A Publication from INPUT's Outsourcing Information Systems Programme—Europe

## Thorn EMI Computeraid - Focusing on Desktop Services

Thorn EMI Computeraid was established in the UK in 1978 to provide equipment maintenance services relating to personal computers.

The company has now achieved UK revenues of £26 million and is focusing on value added services including the outsourcing of desktop services.

Computeraid's revenues are broken down by service type in Exhibit 1.

Computeraid uses the term value-added services to denote service offerings which extend beyond maintenance services.

Computeraid's value-added services include the following offerings:

- Software development
- Software support
- IS outsourcing
- Technical consultancy

Exhibit 1

### Revenues by Service Type, 1992

Service	Revenues (£m)	Proportion (%)
Maintenance Services	15.5	60
Value Added Services	6.5	25
Equipment Product Sales	4.0	15
TOTAL	26.0	100

Source: INPUT

Computeraid is aiming to grow its outsourced desktop services revenues by:

- Offering a full range of desktop services;
- Targeting medium to large organisations;
- Using information systems to provide high quality customer care.

## Offering a Full Range of Desktop Services

Computeraid offers the following services as components of its own outsourcing offering:

- Strategic Services
  - Systems consultancy
  - Project management
  - Application development
- Management Services
  - Systems management
  - Network management
  - Help desk management
  - Asset management
- Operational Services
  - Hardware maintenance
  - Hardware and software supply
  - Installation services
  - Software support

To facilitate product supply, Computeraid is accredited by a large number of IT hardware/software vendors, of whom the following are representative:

IBM - Systems Centre (1990-93), Quality Dealer Award  
 Compaq - Systems Reseller  
 Novell - Systems House  
 Microsoft - Networking Specialist Centre  
 Apple - Qualified Third Party Maintainer  
 Lotus - Authorised Reseller

The company employs over 500 staff, of whom over 50% are technical specialists and experienced IT management professionals.

Computeraid is particularly strong in the retail sector with users of EPOS and Office Systems. Its TARA software allows retailers to implement EPOS applications on "Open Systems" platforms. This depth of experience stems from the acquisition of Micrologic's retail software products, and their development and support team in 1990.

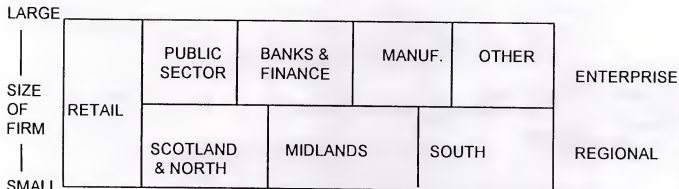
## Targeting Medium to Large Organisations

Computeraid tends to concentrate in the medium to large size organisation marketplace, where it believes it can offer the best value for money. The company's experience has shown that very large organisations can deliver their own service/support capability at a comparable cost to an external vendor.

Computeraid perceives that small organisations are mainly looking for problem resolution at the lowest price, without being prepared to acknowledge the infrastructure costs that an external vendor must bear to deliver premium service.

Exhibit 2

### BUSINESS AREA CONCENTRATION



Source: THORN EMI Computeraid

Computeraid therefore focuses on the sizes of organisations mentioned above, with particular emphasis in the vertical/regional sectors shown in Exhibit 2.

Computeraid's overall revenues can be broken down between these areas as follows:

- Enterprise 52%
- Retail 36%
- Regional 12%

Examples of outsourced desktop services contracts won by Computeraid are listed in Exhibit 3.

## Using Information Systems to Provide High-Quality Customer Care

Computeraid sees its roles as:

- Assisting clients to benefit from the use of technology, and take decisions on its adoption.
- Managing this technology.

When undertaking delivery of an IS outsourcing contract, Computeraid establishes a "Core Service" team, whose responsibility is to deliver the service level criteria defined in the contract.

Exhibit 3

### Thorn EMI Computeraid Outsourcing Contracts

Client	Scope of Service
Sedgwick	Desktop services for over 6000 workstations and associated peripherals
Mercury Personal Communications (MPC)	Implementation & management of LAN supporting over 400 users
Unitel	Provision of IT infrastructure for start-up organisation

Source: INPUT

So far Computeraid has been most successful in supporting start-ups in the telecommunications sector such as Unitel and Mercury Personal Communications (MPC). In the case of MPC, the environment managed by Computeraid includes AS/400, Sun and Unix systems together with a Novell LAN supporting over 400 users.

For MPC, Computeraid provides:

- Product supply and installation
- Hardware maintenance and software support
- Unix support and consultancy
- Network support and management
- Help desk, e-mail support, and administration.

The team may be located on the client site, remotely, or a combination of both. Each contract is also assigned a Service Manager, who acts as the executive liaison point with the client, and has overall responsibility for service delivery, calling on central specialist skills required to meet client objectives.

Where Computeraid manages a client's IT service, it prefers to act as prime contractor and takes responsibility for the quality of service of any other subcontractors involved. The company achieved BS5750 Part 1 status in 1991, and sees this, plus its specially formulated customer care programme, as fundamental to today's business facing culture.

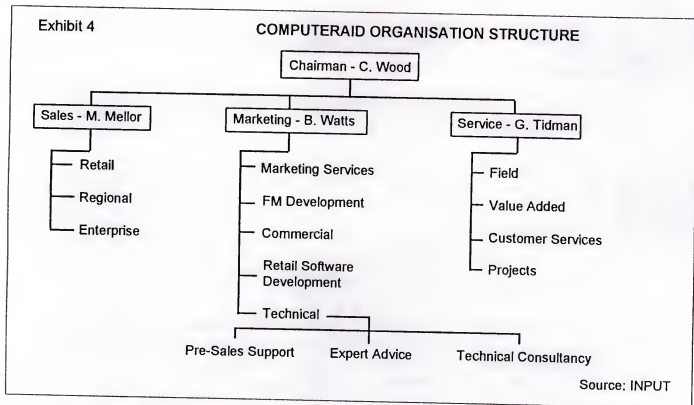
One necessity for vendors operating in the desktop services market is a sophisticated command/control system, with built in levels of problem management referral and key performance indicators to identify future "hot spots". Computeraid has implemented a specially written Information System (CASIS) to assist the organisation in delivering this high quality customer care.

Computeraid utilises historical information about hardware reliability to identify potential areas of failure. The necessary actions can be put in place, not just to monitor the situation, but to also ensure that there is no impact on user activity. This can cover replacement of suspect hardware, ensuring security procedures are in place and advising on future purchasing policy. In short considering the implications of an observed circumstance and applying corrective action, before "failure" occurs.

Particular emphasis is placed by Computeraid on training staff in the core competences of DOS/ WINDOWS, OS/2, NOVELL, UNIX &

Communications. Further specific training is added as necessary. The company operates a progressive policy of migrating field service skills into value-added service skills. To this end, it has a training organisation that under-takes both internal and customer education. The company operates with 13 regional centres throughout the United Kingdom and Eire. It undertakes retail software development from Milton Keynes, and sees increased selling activities being undertaken on a regional basis. It has an overall objective to route ALL client contact through a unified channel, which can then be redirected to the most appropriate resolution point.

The organisation that Computeraid currently adopts to market and deliver its services is shown in Exhibit 4.



This profile is issued as part of INPUT's Outsourcing Information Systems Programme for the information services industry. If you have any questions or comments on this profile, please call your local INPUT organisation or Peter Lines at INPUT, 17 Hill Street, Mayfair, London W1X 7FB England. (071) 493 9335, Fax (071) 629 0179